THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT): (a) The figures about the number of prisoners above the age of 65 years lodged in various jails in the country are not available. However as per statistics compiled by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), there were 34,093 prisoners above the age of 50 years including women as on 31st December 2002, in various jails in the country. In Tihar Jail, there were 471 prisoners (including women) above the age of 50 years on that date.

(b) to (d) The National Human Rights Commission has issued guidelines to all the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for premature release of prisoners. One of the eligibility criteria suggested in these guidelines for premature release is that the convicted prisoner undergoing the sentence of live imprisonment should be of the age of 65 years or above and he or she should have served atleast 7 years of imprisonment including the remissions. The decisions regarding premature release are generally taken by the concerned State Government on the recommendations of the State Sentence Review Board made on the basis of facts & merit of each case as per the eligibility criteria.

Talks with ULFA

845. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government have expressed its willingness to talk to the outlawed ULFA on its own terms;

(b) if so, the terms set by the ULFA; and

(c) what were the Centre's constraints in accepting the ULFA's conditions unilaterally?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) to (c) The Government had received an appeal from Prof. Indira Goswami for "Peace Talks" with United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). The appeal indicated the willingness of ULFA to hold talks with the Government of India without pre-conditions, and also specifically referred to their 'core demand' of sovereignty. In reply to the appeal, it was reiterated that the Government of India had consistently expressed its willingness to talk to all groups, which were prepared to abjure the path of violence.